


ARTICLE

Who Took the Fall in 1408, and Why? Vienna's Elites in Alliances and Conflicts with Habsburg Dukes

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Abstract

This article focuses on the involvement of Viennese elites in wide-reaching political conflicts around 1400. Central European princes often held positions as city lords, which resulted in ambivalent relations between them and urban elites, as well as with their kin residing in the countryside. Setting aside grand categories of institutional history in favor of the interactions and relations of concrete actors, their social networks, and their involvement in shaping politics, the article follows six urban actors through a major conflict that involved the city lords, urban authorities, and individual actors and eventually resulted in the beheading of three of them. The article adopts a prosopographical approach to find out more about patterns of social costs and benefits in these conflicts. It argues that considering polyvalent and relational dimensions of belonging can help us better understand constellations of conflict and alliance and the modes and mechanisms of late medieval politics. It eventually establishes the boundaries of social network approaches when it comes to assessing individual motives and their alleged resonance in contemporary narratives of community.

Keywords: Vienna; social networks; conflict; Habsburg; prosopography; urban history; medieval history

Introduction¹

Can anybody tell me why “these good people earned such a severe punishment?” Thus reacted an obviously appalled Duke Ernst to the execution of Vienna’s mayor, Konrad Vorlauf, and two further council members on the order of his brother Leopold.² Konrad Vorlauf, Konrad Rampersdorfer, and Hans Rock had been beheaded publicly on 11 July 1408 at an unusual and ignoble site: Vienna’s pig market. Duke Ernst was not the only one struck by the event. The whole city was shocked by the execution of the three men, with the prominent historiographer Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464) stating that “people’s laments of the cruel fall of so respectable people rose to the stars.”³ In short, this was not the type of execution city dwellers occasionally witnessed, when delinquents, mostly of lower social status, were

¹This paper presents a thematically focused version of Christina Lutter, “Konflikt und Allianz. Muster von Zugehörigkeit im spätmittelalterlichen Wien und Österreich,” in *Strukturbildungen in langfristigen Konflikten des Spätmittelalters/Structural Formations in the Protracted Conflicts of the Late Middle Ages (1250–1500)*, Zeitschrift für historische Forschung, submitted. It relates to comparable aspects of other contributions to this special issue, especially that of Herbert Krammer, who applies a similar approach on the same region and milieu analyzed here, however half a century later.

²Duke Ernst’s letter in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Wien* (QGW see n. 28) II/1, n. 1740: 27 1408 July, Graz, digital document plus abstract at <https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-WStLA/HAUrk/1740/charter>; The original reads “die egenanten frumen leut solhe swere straffe verschuldet haben.” The letter was copied about fifty times and distributed among burghers and guilds; see also QGW II/1, n. 1741. For details see Richard Perger, “Die politische Rolle der Wiener Handwerker im Spätmittelalter,” *Wiener Geschichtsblätter* 38 (1983): 1–36; recently Lutter, “Konflikt und Allianz.”

³Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, MGH *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* N.S. 13, ed. Alphons Lhotsky (Berlin, 1967), 341, line 26; 342, line 1: “Commota est igitur civitas tota, ascendit planctus usque ad sidera hoc crudeli casu tam spectabilium virorum, cuius et originem et causam exploratas usque non habui nisi fortassis, si hii pre ceteris se fideles exhibuerunt domino suo naturali.” On Ebendorfer’s argument concerning the victims’ loyalty to their *dominus naturalis* see below, n. 75.

put to death. Rather, the events of July 1408 were deemed exceptional not least because of the victims' high social standing. They marked a peak in long-running conflicts within and beyond the city of Vienna that involved individual actors, diverse social groups, and the Habsburg dukes themselves, several of whom had by then fought over rulership in the Austrian lands for a couple of decades.⁴

The events just sketched represent only the tip of a much larger iceberg that has, for the most part, remained out of our sight up until now—partly because of the patchy nature of the sources, partly because historians have tended to primarily investigate them through the lens of those large categories (lordship, estates, city) that we have set out to critically analyze in this special issue. Twenty years ago, Warren Brown and Piotr Górecki convincingly argued that conflict was an integral part of medieval political action.⁵ Conflict was ordinary, a set of practices intricately related to others that involved negotiating and establishing consensus, and whose practices in turn shaped the building of community and mechanisms of exclusion from it. Thus, dynamics of conflict both made visible and contributed to constituting social relations and patterns of belonging. Or, to quote a recent study by Patrick Lantschner: “the logic of conflict is the logic of political order itself.”⁶

This article focuses on the involvement of Viennese elites in wide-reaching political conflicts around 1400. Central European princes often also held positions as city lords, which resulted in ambivalent relations between them and urban elites, as well as with their kin residing in the countryside. Members of these groups both constituted part of the princes' entourage and had multiple connections amongst each other.⁷ These complex relations make it difficult to assess who was supporting whom, when and why they were doing so, and which general aims and more particular interests they followed. However, addressing all these questions together promises to better reveal the modes and mechanisms of late medieval politics. This has recently been shown by Duncan Hardy in his book on associative political culture in the fifteenth-century Holy Roman Empire and by Jonathan Lyon in his long-term analysis of corruption, protection, and justice enacted by medieval and modern officials in the same geographical framework.⁸ Thus, if we want to set aside grand categories of institutional history in favor of focusing on the “lot of folks wrassling around”⁹—their interactions and relations and their involvement in processes of shaping politics—we must turn to issues of cost and benefit in diverse social fields. Considering polyvalent and relational dimensions of belonging can help us better understand constellations of conflict and alliance.¹⁰

⁴Christian Lackner, “Vom Herzogtum Österreich zum Haus Österreich (1278–1519),” in *Geschichte Österreichs*, ed. Thomas Winkelbauer (Vienna, 2015), 110–58; Christina Lutter, “Die Habsburger und Österreich (13. bis 15. Jahrhundert),” in *König Rudolf und der Aufstieg der Habsburger im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller (Darmstadt, 2019), 115–40; for details, see Alois Niederstätter, *Das Jahrhundert der Mitte: An der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit. Österreichische Geschichte 1400–1522*, ed. Herwig Wolfram (Vienna, 1996); for a comparative perspective, see Julia Burkhardt, “Frictions and Fictions of Community, Structures and Representations of Power in Central Europe, c. 1350–1500,” *The Medieval History Journal* 19, no. 2 (2016): 191–228.

⁵Warren C. Brown and Piotr Górecki, “What Conflict Means: The Making of Conflict Studies in the United States, 1970–2000,” in *Conflict in Medieval Europe: Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture*, eds. Brown and Górecki (Hampshire, 2003), 1–35.

⁶Patrick Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370–1440* (Oxford, 2015), 207.

⁷Elisabeth Gruber et al., *Mittler zwischen Herrschaft und Gemeinde. Die Rolle von Funktions- und Führungsgruppen in der mittelalterlichen Urbanisierung Zentraleuropas*, Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 56 (Vienna, 2013); Herwig Weigl, “Stadt, Fürst und Land im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich. Bemerkungen zu Stadtministerialen, dynastischen Verträgen und vermeintlichen Landständen,” in *Adel und Verfassung im hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Reich. Die Vorträge der Tagung im Gedenken an Maximilian Weltin*, NÖLA. Mitteilungen aus dem Niederösterreichischen Landesarchiv 18, eds. Christina Mochty-Weltin and Roman Zehetmayer (St. Pölten, 2018), 104–60; Herbert Knittler, “Zu den Führungsschichten in spätmittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Städten Österreichs,” in *Stadt und Prosopographie. Zur quellenmäßigen Erforschung von Personen und sozialen Gruppen in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Peter Csendes et al. (Linz, 2002), 29–41.

⁸Duncan Hardy, *Associative Political Culture in the Holy Roman Empire: Upper Germany, 1346–1521* (Oxford, 2018); Jonathan R. Lyon, *Corruption, Protection and Justice in Medieval Europe: A Thousand-Year History* (Cambridge, 2022). See also the contributions of both authors to this special issue.

⁹Opening quote in Lyon, *Corruption*, 1; from Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (1946).

¹⁰Christina Lutter, “Verflechtungsgeschichten. Geistliche Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter zwischen Hof, Stadt und Kloster,” in *Kreative Impulse. Innovations- und Transferleistungen religiöser Gemeinschaften im mittelalterlichen Europa*, Klöster als

This approach, while still hesitantly adopted by German-speaking scholars on topics of imperial and regional history (*Reichs- und Landesgeschichte*),¹¹ has become common in urban studies focused on the European west and south. Lantschner defines cities as nodal points bundling social relations and interactions. Their *polycentric* order can thus be related to the equally *polycentric* political structure of their surroundings, urban factions to those that formed in larger political entities: all of them characterized by multiple and dynamically changing jurisdictions executed by a wide spectrum of institutions. Modes of conflict ranged from verbal protest, written claims, ad hoc meetings, and regular associations to violent disputes and organized warfare. Action groups were equally diverse: corporate guilds, long-standing factions, but also short-lived coalitions—all using the multiple resources provided by different political authorities. Many of these elements can be identified in the Holy Roman Empire, too. In his study of its southwestern regions, Hardy shows that much of political life was integrated across the boundaries of institutions identified by traditional *Verfassungsgeschichte*. Political activities crossed regions and factions; elites were highly interconnected and shared comparable modes of peaceful and violent interaction.¹²

Historical Overview

In Austria around 1400, the political situation allows for a similar assessment. From 1365 onward, Habsburg family members were co-ruling, which resulted in competition among them and eventually in divisions of their territories. These conflicts in turn were deeply interwoven with the interests of political elites.¹³ Key elements in these conflicts were struggles among Habsburg family members over guardianship for underage dukes, combined with various alliances between each of them and representatives of noble and urban elites.

It was in these decades-long conflicts that the political representatives of territories—among them cities—formed. Cities, however, embraced heterogeneous social groups: council members from old and newly rising families, craftspeople organized in guilds, churches and monasteries, hospitals, and confraternities. It was exactly this *polycentric* structure that affected various inner-urban factions. Vienna thus provides a case in point both to test Lantschner's model of conflict enacted by a variety of actors and action groups and to connect it to Hardy's suggestion to conceive of late medieval politics in terms of an "associative political culture." It was a key site of negotiation during these decades, but also an actor and a node in a *polycentric* network.¹⁴

From the eleventh century onward, the Babenberg had organized the small march and later duchy in the east of the empire by means of religious and urban foundations, helped by their *ministeriales*. Around 1100 some of these *ministeriales* held property in and around Vienna. Hence, the city's *cives et milites* had kin relations to those who under the Babenberg became key representatives of the duchy. In the late thirteenth century, varying formations of the duchy's elites, including those of Vienna, violently responded to the Habsburgs' takeover of power. The sequences of revolt and violence, negotiation and stabilization show a further pattern: among the supporters of the Habsburg lords were often socially mobile persons, such as foreign merchants or wealthy artisans. They formed groups in times of conflict, and dukes rewarded individuals with offices in both ducal

Innovationslabore 9, eds. Julia Becker and Julia Burkhardt (Regensburg, 2021), 341–71; Christina Lutter, "Negotiated Consent: Power Policy and the Integration of Regional Elites in Late Thirteenth-Century Austria," in *Disciplined Dissent: Strategies of Non-Confrontational Protest in Europe from the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, ed. Fabrizio Titone (Rome, 2016), 41–64.

¹¹See however the important work by Bernd Schneidmüller, "Rule by Consensus: Forms and Concepts of Political Order in the European Middle Ages," *The Medieval History Journal* 16, no. 2 (2013): 449–71; Burkhardt, "Frictions and Fictions"; Jörg Peltzer et al., eds., *Politische Versammlungen und ihre Rituale: Repräsentationsformen und Entscheidungsprozesse des Reichs und der Kirche im späten Mittelalter*, *Mittelalter-Forschungen* 27 (Ostfildern, 2009).

¹²Lantschner, *Logic*, 3–10 (polycentric structure) and 89 (integrative approach); Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*, 6–14.

¹³Christian Lackner, *Hof und Herrschaft. Rat, Kanzlei und Regierung der österreichischen Herzöge (1365–1406)*, *MIÖG* Ergänzungsband 41 (Vienna, 2002); Niederstätter, *Jahrhundert der Mitte*.

¹⁴See Herbert Krammer's contribution to this special issue and Lutter, "Konflikt und Allianz."

and urban administration. New rights were integrated into adapted town ordinances and thus became effective law.¹⁵

Hence, the regular conflicts of Habsburg lords, both with Vienna as a community and with specific persons and groups, were a structural element of social order. These conflicts led to a constant renegotiation of interests and served as catalysts for social differentiation. Patterns of conflict and alliance did not feature binary oppositions between the city's lords and "the city." While Vienna represented a *polycentric* social order, even the lord did not represent *one* clear counterpart, as for almost an entire century competing lords ruled simultaneously. This multiplicity of dynastic actors added a novel element to previous conflict patterns.¹⁶

Divided rule regularly triggered conflicts between Habsburg family members and alliances among their partisans. Temporary alliances developed into associations and these eventually contributed to more formal political organization, by and large coming to be labeled as "estates." However, while "estates" tended to act unanimously within their groups, individual coalitions across "estate" boundaries were quite ordinary too—a phenomenon Duncan Hardy has described among political players on the level of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁷

After Duke Albert III's death (1395), a new dynastic pattern emerged that fostered socially and geographically crisscrossing alliances. Albert had established the branch of Habsburg lineage henceforth called the "donauländische" ("Danube-based"). After his brother Leopold III died (1386) and left four sons, Leopold's oldest son Wilhelm was assigned guardianship of Albert's underage children in the event of Albert's early death. This principle of "seniority" became a key argument in claims to legitimate rule. As a result, even though Albert's own son Albert IV was of full age when his father died (1395), Wilhelm was the dynasty's senior. Wilhelm's supporters argued that this "seniority" legitimated his rule, while young Albert's followers advocated for his position as *dominus naturalis* in the Danubian lands.¹⁸

Here, most nobles supported Albert, while the "Leopoldinian" territories (after Leopold III) stood behind Wilhelm. In Vienna, Wilhelm's main supporters came from the heterogeneous group of craftspeople, but most of the city council backed him, too. A lasting result of a compromise that ended the violent conflicts was a privilege granting artisans—but for the most part those from venerable and prosperous trades—one third of the seats in Vienna's city council (1396).¹⁹ However, new deaths generated new conflicts. In 1404, Albert IV died and left another underage son, Albert V. He was submitted to Wilhelm's tutelage as his father had been before, but Wilhelm himself died only two years later (1406). New disputes arose between his brothers Ernst and Leopold IV. The duchy's representatives acknowledged the latter as regent and put him in charge of little Albert's guardianship. Meanwhile, recurrent assaults at the Moravian border threatened the population.²⁰

An Escalating Conflict

At this point, the associative mode of protest became effective anew, as many representatives of the duchy joined forces in a new alliance, using the argument of the lack of order and security to oppose Leopold, who as the country's regent oversaw the problem. Peace, security, and the "common good"

¹⁵On the city's history see Peter Csendes and Ferdinand Opll, eds., *Wien. Geschichte einer Stadt. Von den Anfängen bis zur Ersten Wiener Türkenbelagerung (1529)* (Vienna, 2001); Susana Zapke and Elisabeth Gruber, eds., *A Companion to Medieval Vienna*, Brill's Companion to European History 25 (Leiden, 2021); for details on the patterns of these earlier conflicts see Christina Lutter, "Ways of Belonging to Medieval Vienna," *ibid.*, 267–311, here at 271–85.

¹⁶Lutter, "Konflikt und Allianz," 16.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 10–12 and 16–18; Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*.

¹⁸Christian Lackner, "Des mocht er nicht geniessen, wiewohl er der rechte naturleichen erbe was. Zum Hollenburger Vertrag vom 22. November 1395," *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich* 65 (1999): 1–15; Daniel Luger, "Sumus igitur ... nostro naturali domino obligati." Zur "natürlichen Herrschaft" in Böhmen, Österreich und Ungarn um die Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts, in *Grey Eminences in Action: Personal Structures of Informal Decision-Making at Late Medieval Courts*, ed. Jonathan Dumont et al. (Cologne, 2024), in press.

¹⁹Perger, "Handwerker," 11–15.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 16–17 for details on these and the following events.

were central values in the political imagery across the Holy Roman Empire and beyond. In the Austrian duchy, the regent's inability to guarantee these values was a reason for many to opt for Ernst instead of Leopold as regent.²¹ Consequently, conflicts turned violent again, and again Viennese factions were involved. Now, and in analogy to the noble lords in the Danubian lands, urban elites including clerical ones supported Ernst, while most of the poorer craftspeople sided with Leopold, as did the Austrian knights. Conflict escalated, and in January 1408 Ernst had five craftspeople executed.²²

Soon after these executions, however, the ducal brothers reached a compromise, leaving the city to the consequences of the conflict they had begun. Ernst moved to Graz; Leopold negotiated with members of the city council, first in Wiener Neustadt, then in St. Pölten. Yet, on its way home from Leopold, Vienna's delegation was assaulted by a knight named Hans Laun and his peers. One member of the city council died in the event; the rest were held for ransom in nearby castles. Ensuing negotiations to free them took five months and involved Duke Leopold and the remainder of Vienna's city councilors. The demanded ransom amounted to the huge sum of 10,000 guilders, which the city was allowed to offset against its tax liability. But the climax of the conflict was yet to come. When Vienna's councilors imposed a new tax on wine to repay the city's debt, the *Gemein*—the city's largest political body, comprised of mostly non-elite burghers—responded with huge protests. The protesters turned to their ally Duke Leopold and asked for council members to be dismissed. Leopold, however, went beyond this request: he had Mayor Konrad Vorlauf and six others arrested. Within four days, and without any legal charges against them, three of them were beheaded at the Vienna pig market (July 11, 1408). The victims were buried outside the city's main parish church, St. Stephen's, and only in 1430 were they rehabilitated and solemnly entombed at a prominent site in the same church.²³

Was this a retaliatory measure between the dukes, as suggested by the Klosterneuburg chronicle? Did these honorable men die for their *dominus naturalis*, young Duke Albert, who waited in the background to come of age, as suggested by Thomas Ebendorfer half a century later? Or had the "internal" conflicts between Viennese council members and the city's poorer representatives in the *Gemein* simply come to a head?²⁴ Obviously, this is not a question of either/or. Rather, all these proposed interpretations address the arguments, conflict modes, and actor types included in the work of Patrick Lantschner and Duncan Hardy. We know little, however, about the victims and their role: Who were the men who were executed in Vienna's pig market in July 1408? Were they merely in the wrong place at the wrong time? Why did three of them take the fall, while the rest got off the hook? Do the sources convey any information about their social profiles or their relations among each other and with the ducal family?

²¹Both Duncan Hardy's and Herbert Kramer's contributions to this special issue make similar points, though for a slightly later period. On the political imagery see also Konstantin Langmaier, "Dem Land Ere und Nucz, Frid und Gemach: Das Land als Ehr-, Nutz- und Friedensgemeinschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um den Gemeinen Nutzen," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 103 (2016): 178–200; for a Central European comparison see Julia Burkhardt, "Assemblies in the Holy Roman Empire and the East Central European Kingdoms: A Comparative Essay on Political Participation and Representation," in: *Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe. Power, Rituals and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 78), eds. Grischa Vercamer and Dušan Zupka (Leiden, 2022), 198–214; for an urban perspective see Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *De Bono Communi. The Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (13th–16th c.)* (Turnhout, 2010).

²²Key sources of this and the following events are *Die kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik 1322–1428*, *Monumenta Claustroneoburgensia I*, Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichtsquellen 7, ed. Hartmann J. Zeibig (1851), 231–52, written between 1400 and 1428, and Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 336–42; commented in Perger, "Handwerker," 17–18.

²³Perger, "Handwerker," 18–19 with detailed references, nn. 102 and 105 on Stefan Schröfel, a burgher from nearby Klosterneuburg, who was the only captive who did not belong to the group of Viennese burghers. On the burial and rehabilitation see below, n. 74.

²⁴*Kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik* on 1408; Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 340f. For a survey on all historiographical sources on the events see Ferdinand Opll, ed., *Nachrichten aus dem mittelalterlichen Wien. Zeitgenossen berichten* (Vienna, 1995), 113–16.

Polyvalent Dimensions of Belonging

In short, I want to turn back to those dimensions of belonging mentioned earlier. The protagonists' kin and marital relations, including friendship and neighborhood, as well as their property and offices can all be conceived of as resources that mutually influenced each other, contributed to their social capital, and were simultaneously related to the dimensions of their belonging to wider networks of social groups.²⁵ At first glance, all the captives of July 1408—both survivors and victims—shared a high concentration of social capital, consisting of related resources such as council membership, additional urban and ducal offices, property in town and in its surroundings, kinship and marriage ties to other influential burgher families, networks of friendship, and “co-action” (for instance, when they recurrently acted as *Geschäftsherren* to attest last wills). Proximity to the ducal milieu offered the prospect of career advancement, but it also posed the risk of getting caught between conflicting lines. By following the protagonists of 1408 and reconstructing their social networks in town and beyond, my hope is to shed some light on the political dimensions of this conflict or even discover new clues as to why some of “these good men” had to die, while others survived, went on with their lives, and carved out remarkable careers.

To accomplish this, I draw on a number of sources, including the monumental surveys of Vienna's council members that were compiled by Leopold Sailer and Richard Perger in the predigital age.²⁶ For prosopographical details on the protagonists of 1408, I also utilize the sources in the recently fully digitized *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Wien* (QGW),²⁷ among which is a collection of all the charters from Vienna's municipal archives with abstracts on the *monasterium.net* website.²⁸ This material has become the cornerstone of a database with detailed prosopographical data on persons of both genders: their roles in legal transactions, titles, offices, and relations among each other.²⁹ Hence, I was able to use data from these charters systematically up until 1411, the year in which young Duke Albrecht V, *dominus naturalis* of the Danubian lands, was released from the tutelage of his senior relatives.³⁰ Moreover, I consulted Vienna's municipal registers (1368–1419) documenting purchases, rents, and loans, and—albeit less systematically—sources from other archives compiled in the QGW.³¹

These materials allow us to assess when the names of our six protagonists were mentioned for the first time, which provides a preliminary assessment of their age and social status (the victims are marked with an †): 1377 Hans Zirnast; 1378 Konrad Rampersdorfer†; 1384 Hans Mosprunner; 1385 Konrad Vorlauff†; 1390 Hans Rock†; 1392 Rudolf Angerfelder.³² If we consider their overall mentions in Vienna's charters (1377–1411), two of the survivors, Mosprunner and Zirnast, take the lead with 52 mentions, followed by Vorlauff† (33) and Rampersdorfer† (29), while Angerfelder has only 22, and Rock† just 12 mentions. Thus, no specific pattern emerges here, apart from the fact that the younger ones (Angerfelder, Rock†) have fewer mentions than their older peers, and the victims fewer than the survivors, as the latter continued going about their affairs after July 1408 as they had before.

²⁵For the conceptual framework see Lutter, “Verflechtungsgeschichten,” based on Pierre Bourdieu's work on social capital sorts with their functions and effects in various fields constituting social space. On employing this approach to historical work see Philip S. Gorski, *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (Durham, 2013).

²⁶Leopold Sailer, *Die Wiener Ratsbürger des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Studien aus dem Archiv der Stadt Wien 3/4 (Vienna, 1931); Richard Perger, *Die Wiener Ratsbürger 1396–1526. Ein Handbuch*, Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 18 (Vienna, 1988).

²⁷Quoted as QGW at https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Quellen_zur_Geschichte_der_Stadt_Wien (last access 9 July 2023), see also Herbert Krammer's contribution for an approach similar to the one proposed here.

²⁸QGW II/1-4 at <https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-WStLA/HAUrk/fond> (last access 9 July 2023).

²⁹On the database and results see Lutter et al., “Soziale Netzwerke im spätmittelalterlichen Wien. Geschlecht, Verwandtschaft und Objektkultur,” *MEMO. Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture Online* 2 (2021): <http://dx.doi.org/10.25536/2021q002>; Lutter et al., “Kinship, Gender and Spiritual Economy in Medieval Central European Towns,” *History and Anthropology* 32, no. 2 (2021): 249–70.

³⁰For the political background see Lackner, “Zum Hollenburger Vertrag.”

³¹QGW III *Kaufbücher, Gewerbuch, Satzbuch* (property registers, see n. 27 for the link to the references to QGW in the following footnotes, if not indicated otherwise); see also Thomas Ertl and Thomas Haffner, “The Property Market of Late Medieval Vienna: Institutional Framework and Social Practice,” in Zapke and Gruber, *Companion to Medieval Vienna*, 115–34.

³²On these data see also Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 164, 198, 226, 231, 235, 261.

The charters cover various types of legal actions, from official roles as urban representatives to purchases of vineyards, and thus give us a rough estimation of people's standing in Vienna's social elite related to their age, wealth, kin, and offices. Hence, if we look at the overall top thirty mentions in the same material and period (1377–1411), we see other prominent burghers, such as Paul Holzkäufel (69 mentions) and Niklas Würfel (58 mentions), featuring even more often than the top listed among our protagonists (Mosprunner, Zirnast), while others appear more frequently than Rudolf Angerfelder and Hans Rock. This implies that the “1408 group” did not particularly stand out among its peers. No less significantly, almost all Habsburg dukes of the time (Albert III and IV, Wilhelm and Leopold) take top positions between 67 and 33 mentions, testifying to their involvement in the city's affairs and to individual burghers' contacts with the dukes (for instance, concerning large liabilities).³³

The Key Actors—A Prosopographical Approach

If we want to assess the protagonists' social capital more specifically, office holding is among the key assets: Konrad Vorlauf, mayor in 1408, had held this position twice before (1403/4; 1406/7). In 1396/97, he was the first in his family to be elected member of the city council. This was the year when Duke Wilhelm's privilege not only opened the city council to rich artisans but also signaled the rise of new affluent families. Vorlauf went on to be elected to the council five more times, before and between his appointments as mayor.³⁴ As for kin relations and property, the name Vorlauf is first documented in 1353 in Klosterneuburg, where an “older” Konrad and his wife Anna purchased a vineyard.³⁵ During the following decades, family members bought and sold several houses in prominent Viennese locations, among them the “older” Konrad and his (second) wife Katharina, and Konrad's son Hans and his wife Christina. Although no mention is made of their professions, they were clearly among the new rich families that became dominant in late fourteenth-century Vienna, while some of the older families were losing influence due to financial problems.³⁶

One branch of the family, Friedrich and Anna, had four children, though all but one died young. As a result, the parents committed Katharina, the only child left, to St. Lawrence, one of Vienna's prestigious women's monasteries, where her cousin Anna—a sister of the “younger Konrad”—also dwelled. She was endowed with a substantial rent provided by a loan on two of her parents' houses on Baker Street. Another woman, addressed as Vorlaufin, was mentioned in 1410 in the “heaven's gate” nunnery (*Himmelpforte*).³⁷ Hence, the Vorlauf family was connected to some of Vienna's most important ecclesiastical institutions in the same manner as the city's older families were from the late thirteenth century onward, using these communities both as hubs for their social networks and for property arrangements.³⁸

The later mayor Konrad himself owned a couple of houses, one left to him by his first wife Katharina, widow of a man named Wisent of Dornbach.³⁹ We know of other properties because

³³QGW II/1, n. 1687, 11 May 1407, mentions an obligation of 3,000 pounds that Duke Leopold owed to a Viennese burgher named Hans Arnsdorfer (see n. 28 for the link to the references to QGW II/2 in the following footnotes).

³⁴Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 198.

³⁵Klosterneuburg, Stiftsarchiv (1002–1767): 30 January 1353 (https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-StiAK/KlosterneuburgCanReg/1353_I_30/charter?q=vorlauf, accessed 14 July 2023). Sources are often imprecise on kin relations; older research thus resorted to labeling people either with qualifiers (“the older”/“the younger”) or numbered them (I, II, III). The “younger” Konrad thus may have been the “older”'s son or an in-law.

³⁶Evidence, e.g., in QGW III/1, n. 19: 10 February 1368; n. 294: 22 November 1370; n. 1261: 4 September 1380 (further references in QGW III/3/1, *Satzbuch A I* and QGW III/2 *Gewerbuch B*); see also Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, e.g., at 146–47 on loss of influence.

³⁷Evidence in QGW I/1, n. 403: 13 June 1371 (*Urkunden des Schottenstifts*) and QGW III/3/1, *Satzbuch A I*, n. 3119: 23 March 1374; the Vorlaufin in Wilhelm Brauneder, Gerhard Jaritz, and Ch. Neschwara, eds., *Die Wiener Stadtbücher 1395–1430*, vol. 5, *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum [FRA] III/10/1-5* (Vienna, 1998–2018); here 3, n. 1719: 11 December 1410.

³⁸See Christina Lutter, “Donators' Choice? How Benefactors Related to Religious Houses in Medieval Vienna,” in *Über Religion Entscheiden: Religiöse Optionen und Alternativen im mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Christentum*, eds. Matthias Pohl and Sita Steckel (Tübingen, 2021), 185–216; Lutter et al., “Kinship, Gender, and Spiritual Economy.”

³⁹QGW III/2 *Gewerbuch B*, n. 2378: 12 August 1401; Katharina's last will in *Stadtbücher 2*, n. 689: 28 June 1401.

after his death, Konrad's second wife Dorothea negotiated her late husband's loans and obligations, which testify to at least two additional houses in prominent locations.⁴⁰ Dorothea was the daughter of Anna and Jacob Süß, who had been a member of the city council in 1401/2. In his testament of 1419 he assigned Dorothea, obviously the oldest of at least four sons and daughters, to take care of their parents' house and business and her mother and her siblings, including their clerical education and marriage arrangements. She outlived her husband by many years (d. c. 1441) and saw his official rehabilitation in 1430.⁴¹

As to networks among peers, from his first election to the city council onward, Konrad is documented together with most of his companions in misfortune but also with other prominent *Ratsbürger*, from whose families council members were recruited. Among his partners in testifying to last wills were Hans Zirnast and Hans Rock, and in his function as mayor he assigned Hans Mosprunner as someone's legal custodian.⁴² The Vorlauf family had in-law relations with the Rampersdorfer family, and in July 1396 Leonhard Urbetsch—of one of the oldest families in Vienna, then the acting urban judge (*Stadtrichter*), an office appointed by the duke—is mentioned as his brother-in-law.⁴³ Such close relations to ducal officials might have both induced and resulted from proximity to the dukes. Yet, an even clearer indicator of his closeness to the ducal milieu is the fact that Konrad served as one of the envoys in the delegation sent to Naples in 1400, when Duke Wilhelm sought a wife. Comparable, albeit weaker, evidence for such proximity exists for Konrad Rampersdorfer, who ordered a copy of a learned work that Duke Wilhelm had had translated into German.⁴⁴

Konrad Rampersdorfer was clearly the oldest among the victims of 1408. By then he had acted as a council member eleven times, from 1390 to 1407/8, and substituted for Konrad Vorlauf as mayor during his imprisonment by Hans Laun. In 1403/4, Rampersdorfer is mentioned as the supervisor of construction at the church *Maria am Gestade*, and one year later he took the function of a *Hansgraf* in charge of trade control. Apart from this position appointed by the duke, he was also member of the prestigious *Hausgenossen*, an urban committee responsible for all affairs related to minting and money exchange control. While his profession remains unspecified, we know that he came to Vienna from Bavaria.⁴⁵ Family members however are evidenced in Vienna from 1351 on, with seats in the city council documented since 1356. They had many houses in the city; Konrad alone owned at least eight and a half houses, as well as several vineyards, shops on Vienna's "high market," and brick kilns in the suburbs.⁴⁶ His older relative Albrecht was equally affluent, and several of their wives—Konrad was married three times—brought significant wealth into the family, as evidenced by Konrad's third wife Barbara's last will.⁴⁷ Apart from in-law relations with the Vorlaufs, the Rampersdorfer family was related to the Schemnitzers, the Hansgrafs (both old *Ratsbürger* families), and the Rössls. Moreover, Konrad Rampersdorfer shared in-laws and co-witnessed legal acts with Hans Zirnast. His third wife, Barbara's, sister Margarethe was a nun in St. Lawrence, which also hosted Vorlauf family members.⁴⁸

⁴⁰In chronological order: QGW III/2, n. 2574: 30 January 1409; QGW II/1, n. 1776: 2 October 1409; QGW 1/1, n. 56: 21 January 1411; QGW III/2, n. 2625: 1 May 1411; München, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Hochstift Passau Urkunden (802–1808) 1197: 15 May 1411, (<https://www.monasterium.net/mom/DE-BayHStA/HUPassau/1197/charter?q=vorlauf> accessed 9 July 2023); QGW III/2, n. 2692: 29 November 1413.

⁴¹*Stadtbücher* 5, n. 2688: 2 May 1419, last will of Jacob Süß; further mentions of Dorothea in QGW III/2, nn. 2625, 2692; Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 252–53 (Jacob Süß); Perger, "Handwerker," 21–22 with n. 112 on Dorothea's death ca. 1441.

⁴²In chronological order: *Stadtbücher* 1, n. 139: 5 April 1397 (Zirnast); *Stadtbücher* 2, n. 1021: 29 September 1404, (Mosprunner); n. 1024: 11 May 1402; and 3, n. 1338: 14 September 1403 (Rock).

⁴³*Stadtbücher* 1, n. 74: 15 July 1396 (Urbetsch); Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 299 and 301: the "older" Konrad's third wife was a daughter of Wilhelm II Rampersdorfer; see also Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 208.

⁴⁴*Ebendorfer, Chronica Austriae*, 323; Perger, "Handwerker," 15 with nn. 91–92.

⁴⁵Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 231 (background and offices).

⁴⁶Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 178 (family), 364–65 (property and offices), 484–85 (houses).

⁴⁷Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 363–65; *Stadtbücher* 3, n. 1499: 11 September 1408 (Barbara's last will).

⁴⁸Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 298–99, 349, 364; *Stadtbücher* 1, n. 1431: 17 June 1399; 2, n. 802: 29 October 1400; and QGW II/1, n. 1507: 10 April 1402 (Zirnast); on Margarethe see Barbara's last will (n. 47).

Evidence in Vienna for the family of Hans Rock, the third victim of July 1408, dates to the 1340s, with members on the city council from 1382 onward and substantial properties in the city.⁴⁹ Hans was elected council member four times, beginning in the seminal period 1396/97, like Konrad Vorlauf. In 1398/99, he acted as mayor, and from 1405 onward he recurrently held the ducal office of a *Judenrichter*, an arbiter of conflicts between Christians and members of Vienna's Jewish community. Hans came to Vienna from the region around nearby Tulln. He was a merchant and member of the prestigious urban committee of *Hausgenossen* (over which an "older" Konrad Rock presided twice as a mint master).⁵⁰ Hans owned at least six and a half houses, a vineyard, a butcher's stall, and an exchange bank. He was married twice: first to Barbara, daughter of Niklas Spitzer from Regensburg, and later to Margarethe, daughter of the prominent Leonhard Urbetsch, who was Konrad Vorlauf's in-law. Hans Mosprunner's sister Anna in turn was the second wife of Hans Rock's relative Konrad. Hans Rock acted together with Konrad Vorlauf as *Geschäftsherren* on the occasion of last wills brought before the city council in 1402 and 1403, and either he himself or an older relative of the same name testified already in 1371 to a legal act together with Hans Zirnast.⁵¹

Elements of Social Capital

To sum up briefly, all three victims came from an affluent, socially mobile, and probably merchant milieu, whose families had by 1408 already been documented in Vienna for about two generations with substantial amounts of landed property and other assets. Family members had started to act as office holders from the 1350s (Rampersdorfer), 1380s (Rock), and from 1396 in Vorlauf's case. During these decades, they intermarried both with older families, some of them prominent long-term *Ratsbürger* like the Urbetsch or Schemnitzer, and among each other. These relations went along with committing children to the same monasteries as well as acting together in legal acts that required respected persons. Consequently, contemporary sources recurrently address all three victims as honorable people. What is more, all of them held both prominent positions in urban government, above all the city council, and in ducal administration—Rampersdorfer as Hansgraf, Rock as *Judenrichter*—or, in Vorlauf's case, as an envoy in Duke Wilhelm's delegation to Naples.

In short, minor variations notwithstanding, the profiles of these three men look similar also at second glance. Let us now investigate the whereabouts of their fellow captives—those who were, by contrast, released after only a couple of days and, after having paid substantial fines, went on with their lives and careers.

Like Vorlauf, Rampersdorfer, and Rock, Rudolf Angerfelder came from a family first documented in the mid-fourteenth century. Like the Rampersdorfer and Rock families, the Angerfelder had in-law relations to prominent old families like the Polls, and survived the financial crisis of around 1400, which simultaneously facilitated the social rise and political careers of some, as represented by the opening of the city council in 1396.⁵² However, while the Rampersdorfers and Rocks were represented on the city council prior to 1396, Angerfelder, like Vorlauf, was the first family member to be elected to this committee, albeit in the very election period prior to the privilege.⁵³ He probably came to Vienna from around Korneuburg, started out as a servant of Michael Fink, and is later documented as a merchant. His first wife, Agnes from the old Geukramer family, brought a house into their marriage, and after his wife's and his lord's deaths, Angerfelder married Fink's widow, Anna, who owned a yard at one of the main city gates (*Kärntnertor*), as well as a vineyard in Grinzing. Subsequently, he owned at least four houses, an exchange bank, and the yard and vineyard left to him by his wife.⁵⁴

⁴⁹Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 182 (family), 375–76 (property and offices), 484–85 (houses).

⁵⁰Perger; *Ratsbürger*, 235–36 (background and offices).

⁵¹Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 374–376, 433 (family, property, and offices); *Stadtbücher* 1, n. 1371: 6 September 1397 (Zirnast); 2, n. 1024: 11 May 1402; and 3, n. 1338: 14 September 1403 (Vorlauf).

⁵²Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 164 (offices) and Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 140–45, 162–64, 174, 179 (family and kin), 202–3 (property and offices), and 482 (houses).

⁵³Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 164.

⁵⁴Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 199–203.

Someone who was probably an older relative, Peter Angerfelder (first mentioned in 1380), acted as *Hansgraf* (1400/1), and from 1402/3 through 1406/7 in the key function of an urban judge (*Stadtrichter*). After his first election to the city council in 1395/96, Rudolf was re-elected six more times. He was mayor in 1405/6 and thus involved in the arbitration of the Austrian “estates” for Duke Leopold’s tutelage for Albrecht V. After 1408 he served as mayor from 1411 through 1419, while also presiding over Vienna’s *Hausgenossen* as a mint master from 1413 through 1419, the year of his death. His descendants are among the longest traceable families in fifteenth-century Vienna.⁵⁵

Interestingly, before the events of 1408, Rudolf is documented significantly less frequently together with the protagonists of these events than the others are with each other. Yet, a close relation may have existed to Hans Mosprunner, who corroborated Rudolf’s late wife Anna’s last will in 1393.⁵⁶ Comparable to Rudolf Angerfelder, Hans Mosprunner experienced a fine career after 1408. Like the Vorlaufs, the Mosprunners were among those newly rich families who had established their fortune by 1400 and then also held official functions. Hans’s father, Otto, had moved to Vienna from the region around Schwechat; after Otto’s death, his widow Katharina recurrently bought and sold wax production stands. Hans’s sister Anna was married to Konrad Rock. Hans is referred to as a merchant; he had a sister in the nunnery of St. Niklas and fathered several children. He owned at least two houses; he and his wife Anna acted as creditors for influential members of the old Reicholf and Würfel families.⁵⁷

Hans Mosprunner’s personal career started about a decade later than those of his companions of 1408 but developed until his death in the mid-1420s. Before 1408 he only acted as a council member once (1405/6), but he was re-elected nine times starting from 1409/10. However, from 1404 to 1408 he was *Kirchmeister* of St. Stephen’s, directly following Rudolf Angerfelder, who held this influential function in 1403, which consisted of organizing and financing the long-term building process of this prestigious site. Along with his membership in the council, Mosprunner acted as head of Vienna’s urban hospital (1413–14) and later also resumed the *Kirchmeister* function (1420–22).⁵⁸ He was *Geschäftsherr* with Hans Zink and Stephan Poll for the last will of one of Vienna’s most prominent burghers, Niklas Würfel (1405), who addressed all three men as his good friends.⁵⁹ Among Mosprunner’s in-laws were the wealthy Wisent family from Klosterneuburg—Thomas Wisent later even made it to the top position of a ducal finance manager (*Hubmeister*)—and via the Wisents also the Zirnast family, another protagonist of 1408.⁶⁰

Hans Mosprunner and Hans Zirnast also acted together as *Geschäftsherrn*, most conspicuously for Hans Arnsdorfer’s testament (1407), to whose widow and subsequent husband Duke Leopold owed the enormous sum of 3,000 pounds.⁶¹ By then, Hans Zirnast, who also went by the name of Stichel, which he assumed from the first husband of his second wife Anna, had been an influential person for some time. Like Konrad Vorlauf and Hans Rock, he sat on the city council in 1396/97 for the first time, followed by seven further elections before 1408. He was a furrier and thus the only artisan among the captives of 1408. Around 1400 he was custodian of St. Hieronymus, a monastery-like institution notably supported by artisans, where women with illegitimate children and prostitutes were

⁵⁵Perger, *Ratsbürger* 164 (Peter’s and Rudolf’s offices); *Stadtbücher* 3, n. 1328: 12 September 1406. The Viennese delegation embraced Mayor Rudolf Angerfelder, Niclas Weispacher, Paul Würfel, Hans Rock (then *Judenrichter*, see Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 38), and Hans Zirnast.

⁵⁶*Stadtbücher* 2, n. 873: 5 August 1393.

⁵⁷Sailer, *Ratsbürger*, 146–47 (family), 374–76 (houses, kin, creditors); Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 226 (background and offices); on his widow Katharina see, e.g., QGW III/2 *Gewerbuch* B, n. 366: 15 August 1371, and n. 865, 18 February 1377; QGW II/1, n. 1096: 4 November 1385 (sister).

⁵⁸Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 226 (offices), 36 (on 1403); see Barbara Schedl, “St. Stephan in Wien. Politische Konflikte und städtische Kontrolle,” in *Architekturökonomie: Die Finanzierung kirchlicher und kommunaler Bauvorhaben im späteren Mittelalter*, Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beiheft 255, eds. Richard Nemeč and Gerald Schwedler (Stuttgart, 2022), 131–54.

⁵⁹QGW II/1, n. 1615: 2 March 1405.

⁶⁰QGW II/1, n. 2543: 5 November 1435; QGW II/1, n. 2546: 3 December 1435.

⁶¹See n. 33.

“rehabilitated.” From 1402 to his death in late 1408, Zirnast repeatedly served as head of Vienna’s urban hospital.⁶² He had four children with his first wife, and in his last will of 1408 divided his property equally among them. He owned at least three houses (among them a *Methaus* on Vienna’s high market), several vineyards, a meadow, and a forest.⁶³ Charters and records show him as well connected, among others with Vorlauf, Rampersdorfer, Rock, and above all his friend and relative Mosprunner, with whom he administered the highly complex last will of Hans Arnsdorfer, which included Duke Leopold’s aforementioned debts.⁶⁴

If we now finally compare the two groups of victims and survivors of July 1408, the similarities between them are striking. All but the furrier Zirnast came from a similar merchant background, some of them had been members of the council already prior to 1396 (Rampersdorfer, Rock), others from then on. Irrespective of their profession, however, their wealth and networks among each other and other elite families were significant. All either held ducal offices or had relatives who did. The times and positions of their appearance on the city council and in urban or ducal offices are coherent too:⁶⁵ from 1403 to 1406 five out of the six victims/survivors of 1408 acted simultaneously as council members or headed the city’s hospital, the *Kirchmeisteramt* of St. Stephen’s, or the *Hansgraf* office. In 1406/7 and 1407/8, all six of them were part of the city’s inner power circle. Hence, while their individual profiles tell us a lot about key ingredients of a career around 1400, they provide very few clues as to what might have made the difference for their survival or fall.

The Riddle of Political Survival or Fall

So, let us look at the sequence of events in 1408 one more time. Six months prior to their arrest by Duke Leopold, three of these men—Mayor Konrad Vorlauf and the council members Hans Rock and Rudolf Angerfelder—were among the delegation members ambushed by Hans Laun and companions.⁶⁶ During their long imprisonment, Konrad Rampersdorfer substituted for Vorlauf as mayor. Hans Mosprunner and Hans Zirnast were not part of the group of prisoners, while other captured *Ratsbürger* from the delegation (Stephan Poll, Friedrich von Dorfen) were not among those arrested in July. In the long negotiations with the group around Laun, the key issue seems to have been ransom money. The Vienna city council was likely tasked with its acquisition, while Leopold allowed for the offset tax liability—after all, it was he who had granted the delegation free escort on its way from St. Pölten back to Vienna, when they fell prey to Laun’s ambush. Still, the city council arguably had to raise more money to balance the loss of 10,000 guilders. The new wine tax imposed on the city’s inhabitants, who had by then been suffering for years from violent conflicts and bad harvests, was obviously the last straw for the *Gemein*: representing predominantly the not so well-off artisans, it might have put significant pressure on Leopold and the council to have at least some of the people responsible for their misery take the fall. After all, the urban elites’ ducal “patron” Ernst had had five craftspeople executed some months earlier.⁶⁷ It is likely, then, that the *Gemein* negotiated a “fair” death toll among Ernst’s urban followers.

Ebendorfer also reports that in those few days before the death sentences, influential people intervened for the prisoners, but in vain. Vorlauf and his recent substitute as mayor, the old and venerable Rampersdorfer, were *ex officio* so deeply involved in the Laun affair and deal, and were likewise such typical elite representatives, that in the eyes of the *Gemein* they must have seemed logical candidates for this compensation. Hans Rock and Rudolf Angerfelder were their companions both on that year’s

⁶²Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 261 (name, offices, and occupation); QGW II/1, n. 1597: 25 October 1404 (Anna’s husbands). On St. Hieronymus see Lutter, “Ways of Belonging,” 297f with further references.

⁶³Last will in *Stadtbücher* 3, n. 1511: 30 October 1408; see QGW I/4, n. 4321: 18 December 1408 (property).

⁶⁴For example, QGW II/1, n. 1371: 6 October 1397 (Rock); n. 1431: 17 June 1399; n. 1507: 10 April 1402 (Rampersdorfer); n. 1687: 11 May 1407 (see n. 33) and related charters (Mosprunner); *Stadtbücher* 1, n. 139: 5 April 1397 (Vorlauf).

⁶⁵Data in Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 35–40.

⁶⁶On what follows see above, see nn. 22f.

⁶⁷*Kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik* on 1408; Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 336, line 24 to 337, line 4 also states their names and professions.

council and in Laun's assault. It remains unclear why Rock took the fall with Vorlauf and Rampersdorfer, while Angerfelder escaped. Perhaps in the latter's case, interventions were successful or his kin relation with the urban judge Peter Angerfelder kept Duke Leopold from sacrificing him. His participation as Vienna's mayor in the general arbitration of 1406 in favor of Leopold may also have helped (although Rock was present then, too). Moreover, he seems to have been much less connected to the group around the key victims, which might have dissuaded the *Gemein* from demanding his head.⁶⁸

By contrast, neither Hans Mosprunner nor Hans Zirnast, who shared the social network of the three victims, had participated in the fateful delegation, but as *Kirchmeister* of St. Stephen's and head of Vienna's hospital, they were key figures in the management of financial resources. It might well be that they were arrested on account of their role in the deals around the ransom money and tax compensation. On the other hand, the furrier Zirnast was an artisan, which might have tempered this party's mood against him, while Duke Leopold might have owed him and Mosprunner in his personal debt issues. It is also possible that Mosprunner's knowledge and resources as a *Kirchmeister* were needed in a particularly difficult phase in the construction of St. Stephen's. He even kept his job to close the annual account of 1408, probably already under the supervision of Hans Kaufmann, who then took over the office for a year.⁶⁹ Mosprunner's political career restarted, almost uninterrupted, in 1409 with a new election as council member; Angerfelder's career track features a break between 1408 and 1411 but was stellar from then on; Zirnast, however, died only a couple of months later. Whatever the detailed reasons for their rescue might have been, the margin between survival and fall in a crisis of this complexity seems to have been narrow indeed.⁷⁰

Contemporaries wondered about facts and reasons, too, but reacted differently to them. In Vienna's political center, the victims were replaced quickly without major social changes. While Ebendorfer's account terms some new council members prudent, though poor, the new mayor had been a council member before, and several other previous members were re-elected. Administrative sources persisted in addressing the victims as honorable people, and the survivors soon went on with their business.⁷¹ Duke Ernst, however, took to war against Leopold again, assembling a large number of prominent allies, and their violent conflict was only stopped in 1411 by the triple event of little Albert's coming of age, Leopold's death, and King Sigismund's arbitration, which declared the then fourteen-year-old the ruler of the country. One year later, Albert confirmed Vienna's privileges.⁷² Notably, in none of the conflict's phases did any of the involved burghers seem to side politically with any individuals outside town, nor is any of them documented as a personal opponent to inner- or extra-urban key players from the nobility.⁷³ If there were any competitions that involved "these good people" that had unexpected deadly consequences brought about by conflict dynamics, no trace of them was left in any source. Even Laun's assault seems to have been the classic set-up to squeeze money from duke and city, as we know from many other contemporary cases.

Conclusion

Two decades later (1430), the three victims' bodies were exhumed and buried anew at a prominent place in St. Stephen's. They were officially bestowed a gravestone, the inscription of which highlights their honor, virtue, and excellence as well as their mutual love and unity as burghers, which had made them take the inauspicious fall together.⁷⁴ The city's associative political culture, represented in this act

⁶⁸See nn. 55f.

⁶⁹Schedl, "St. Stephan," on the building and accounting process and Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 41 for Hans Kaufmann.

⁷⁰See Herbert Krammer's contribution with comparable results for 1462/63. Compare also the similar case in Zwickau around the same time in Lyon, *Corruption*, 289–92.

⁷¹Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 342, lines 12–16; lists for comparison in Perger, *Ratsbürger*, 41.

⁷²Overview with further references in Perger, "Handwerker," 19.

⁷³This differs significantly from the situation in the 1460s discussed by Herbert Krammer in this special issue.

⁷⁴Discussed in Kohn, Conrad Vorlauf, and Andreas Zajic, "Texts on Public Display: Strategies of Visualising Epigraphic Writing in Late Medieval Austrian Towns," in *Uses of the Written Word in Medieval Towns* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 28), eds. Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (Turnhout, 2014), 389–426.

of collective reshaping of memory, deliberately disguised that their misfortune was caused by the fact that in 1408 Vienna's urban community was anything but united, although the reasons for the escalation lay—at least partly—not within the reach of urban groups but in the hands of their competing lords.

Comparably, though drawing on another well-known figure of legitimation, Thomas Ebendorfer, court historiographer of Albert V, has Mayor Konrad Vorlauf utter as his last words that everything he had done was for his *dominus naturalis* Albert. The legitimizing political reference to the *dominus naturalis* had been common before, but it became increasingly used from Albert's takeover of power in 1411 onward and with the success of the "Albertinian" lineage after his spectacular marriage to King Sigismund's daughter Elisabeth of Luxemburg.⁷⁵ While Vorlauf and his peers' involvement in the dukes' struggles might have been judged ambivalently at their time, the *dominus naturalis* argument was plausible at the time of Ebendorfer's account in the mid-fifteenth century, and especially in court circles.⁷⁶

Both motifs—loyalty to the *dominus naturalis* and love for the community of burghers—suggest that twenty to forty years after the events, surviving eyewitnesses as well as later generations still sought to make sense of ultimately contingent events. Both explanations, then, were equally apt for the victims' rehabilitation. Under Albertinian rule they seem to have been less competing than complementary; ideals of dynastic rule and community values were shared, or at least coexisted, in a political culture that was rooted in both hierarchical and associative principles and served to make sense of the cruel facts underneath the surface of both.

⁷⁵Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 341. See Petr Elbel, Stanislav Bárta, and Wolfram Ziegler, "Die Heirat zwischen Elisabeth von Luxemburg und Herzog Albrecht V. von Österreich. Rechtliche, finanzielle und machtpolitische Zusammenhänge (mit einem Quellenanhang)," in *Manželství v pozdním středověku: rituály a obyčaje. Vyd. 1, Marriage in the Late Middle Ages: Rituals and Customs. Ed. 1*, eds. Martin Nodl and Pawel Kras (Prague, 2014), 79–152.

⁷⁶See above, n. 18.